

















# The hero of Imaginism

By Gleb Struve

GORDON McVAY:  
Esenin: A Life  
352pp. Hodder and Stoughton, £8.95.

The blue-eyed, golden-haired village lad who in 1915 took literary Petrograd by storm and later read his poems before the Empress and her daughters; the cradly blasphemous author of "Inoula" who welcomed the Revolution of 1917 as a prelude to the "paradise" of his dream; the hilarious, drunken, dandyish propagandist of Imaginism, one of the post-revolutionary factions of Russian avant-garde poetry, and the hero of romantic bravado and scandals turning what came to be known as the "cave period" of Russian poetry (1919-21); the husband of Isadora Duncan and her companion on the sensational trip across Europe and the United States (1922-23); the restless and sick man who travelled to the Caucasus and planned going to Tahiti, and in between spent some time in mental hospitals, and the self-styled "last poet of the countryside" who said that his country no longer needed him and ended by taking his own life—these are the different and at times mutually contradictory images of Sergei Esenin (1895-1925), of whom we now have this detailed and well-documented biography by Gordon McVay.

In the 1920s Esenin shared the literary stage and great popularity with Vladimir Mayakovsky (1893-1930). In many ways they stood poles apart. Esenin once expressed this polarity in a succinct formula: "He is a poet for something, whereas I'm a poet because of something." Yet both these leading poets of the so-called heroic period of Soviet literature ended their lives by committing suicide. Esenin was barely thirty when he hanged himself, in the small hours of the morning of December 28, 1925, in his room in the Hotel Anatole in Petrograd. In a farewell poem, which he wrote the day before with his blood (his companion that there was no ink in his room), there were these lines: In this life there's nothing new in dying.

But nor, of course, is living any newer. In a long and rather wordy poem which Mayakovsky wrote upon Esenin's death, he challenged him in the following finale: In this life it is not hard to kick the bucket. It is much more difficult to mould life.

But less than five years after that he shot himself through the heart. Esenin's suicide did not come unexpectedly: there were many premonitory signs of such an end, and at least two Russian critics have said that in all his poetry one can feel his obsession with death. Mayakovsky's end did surprise many of his friends, fellow poets, and admirers, though one of his closest friends, Roman Jakobson, who was then already living in the West and was to become a famous linguist, in a postscriptive essay entitled "About the Generation which Squandered Its Poets" (1932), stressed the persistence of the suicide motif in Mayakovsky's poetry.

Mr McVay's book is the fruit of more than a decade of close study of Esenin's work and his lines, much of it done in the Soviet Union, he had access to a great deal of still unpublished material, including valuable memoirs, preserved in Soviet archives, of those who knew and befriended Esenin at various stages of his literary career. We are given many new biographical facts (especially in the early years), and many details of his life which are not known to most English readers.

Another point of interest in Esenin's life is his relationship with the poet Vladimir Mayakovsky. Esenin was a close friend of Mayakovsky's, and they were often together. Esenin was a close friend of Mayakovsky's, and they were often together. Esenin was a close friend of Mayakovsky's, and they were often together.

recent Soviet bibliography of literature about Esenin (by E. Karпов, second edition 1972), 307 items are listed for the period 1915-25, but during Esenin's lifetime. In 1926-27 alone the number rose to 312, but there were now several articles in which the word "Imaginism" appeared in the title. True, some of them were critical of his work, but there were also some which demanded a posthumous ousting of Esenin from Soviet literature. And the word received wide currency in Soviet political jargon. After 1927 a number of items concerned with Esenin and his work fell sharply: there were only eighty of them between 1928 and 1954. And there were no editions of Esenin's works after the 1926-27 four-volume collection of his poetry.

A revival of interest in Esenin came only after Stalin's death, and more especially in 1955, the sixtieth anniversary of Esenin's birth and the thirtieth of his death, when a new edition of his collected poetry was published. Since then it has been steadily on the increase, and the recent Soviet bibliography (which lists publications outside the Soviet Union) contains 887 items for the period 1955-70, in the last six years there have been numerous new publications many of which have been utilized by Mr McVay, whose own publications, both in English and Russian, represent a valuable recent Soviet bibliography of Esenin. Esenin's life is a story of a poet who was a poet because of something, whereas I'm a poet for something. Esenin was a poet because of something, whereas I'm a poet for something. Esenin was a poet because of something, whereas I'm a poet for something.

Mr McVay's approach is also primarily biographical. We cannot be sure how much of this is due to the fact that his book is the first truly objective biography of the poet. In dealing with Esenin's life he has no personal judgments on his poetry and gives a good picture of the literary background of those days.

Both Esenin's personality and the times in which he lived contributed to the growth of a legend (or even a myth) about him and his work. (There is now even a small town in Soviet work about him by the name of Alexander Andreyevich, called Esenin: The Legend.) Mr McVay rightly points out that to this day Esenin's life is a subject which is not enough known. Even in his relationship with Isadora Duncan there is much that remains unclear, partly because it is overgrown with legend and partly for the simple reason that they had no language in common with the result that there are no epistolary traces left, and no records of the relationship. Much of what was written about Esenin's life is unreliable and shows a complete ignorance of things of the time. This is particularly true of a book by Mary Dood, a friend of Esenin's. Unfortunately, the biography of Esenin by Gordon McVay is a book by Gordon McVay, who acted as Duncan's secretary and was a close friend of Esenin's.

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with whom Esenin for a long time shared a room and even a bed, insists that Esenin did not love women, that he hated (or came to hate) both his first wife and Isadora Duncan, though Esenin's own words about her are the only two women he had really loved. But then, Marienhol maintained that Esenin never loved anyone, that his only true loves were poetry and fun, and in this he may have been right one time, indeed, quite inordinately.

In reading Mr McVay's book it struck me that of the many women in Esenin's life there was one about whom it would be good to know more. This is Galina (Galina) Benislavskaya who, according to Marienhol, became after Esenin's break with Isadora Duncan "the closest person to him: his beloved, his friend, his nurse—in the most beautiful sense of that word." She has also been described as his "guardian angel," and for about two years she was his very efficient literary agent. Marienhol mentions Esenin's note to her in which he described Benislavskaya as his sister in Moscow. Esenin himself wrote to her once: "Dear Galina, you are close to me as a friend, but I don't love you at all as a woman." To the very end she was the only woman who played an important part in his life, and with whom he was most intimate. Esenin's last letter to her, in her very last letter to him, Esenin parted from her a few months before his death to marry Sofya Sukhotin-Tolstaya, the granddaughter of the great war and, in his last letter to her, Esenin wrote: "I loved you very much, but I don't love you any more."

Mr McVay touches also upon the subject which is taboo in the Soviet Union—that of Esenin's alleged homosexual propensities. He did the two-volume edition of Nikolay Klyuev's Works (Munich, 1969) where he quoted a previously unknown extract from the reminiscences of Esenin's friend Vladimir Chernavsky to whom Esenin devoted his last poem, "To Vladimir," in which he wrote: "I loved you very much, but I don't love you any more." Esenin's last letter to her, in her very last letter to him, Esenin parted from her a few months before his death to marry Sofya Sukhotin-Tolstaya, the granddaughter of the great war and, in his last letter to her, Esenin wrote: "I loved you very much, but I don't love you any more."

## Slaves to the truth

By R. F. Christian

RICHARD FRESHBORN,  
GEORGETOWN DONCHIN and  
N. J. ANNING  
Russian Literary Attitudes from  
Pushkin to Solzhenitsyn  
158pp. Macmillan, £7.95.

The opening sentences of the preface admirably sum up the purpose of this book, which grew out of a series of extra-mural lectures at London University, Russian Literature, from Pushkin to Solzhenitsyn. The book is designed "to offer a series of compact evaluations of the literary attitudes of leading Russian literary figures over the last century and a half, and to suggest the continuing role of the literature in Russian life over that period." Not every one will find this a very attractive way as the authors, who use it to mean primarily a writer's attitude of mind and his vision of life, but we accept their definition, we can accept their definition, we can accept their definition.

Richard Freshborn's introductory essay, from which the book takes its title, follows familiar lines in emphasizing the high seriousness and moral content of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy's works, and the moral content of Solzhenitsyn's works, and the moral content of Solzhenitsyn's works.

evils of authoritarianism. Pushkin, as always, is a law unto himself, and this is tacitly acknowledged by attitudes in terms of what he did not do as compared with what he did. The importance of Pushkin is shown to lie in his preservation of literary standards at a time of social turmoil and in his bridging the gap between the nineteenth-century and the twentieth-century socialists. He is shown to be a man of his time, a man of his time, a man of his time.

One cannot talk about literary attitudes outside the context of a writer's life and work, and it is not surprising that the authors of these essays, which are not intended for specialists, can do so. They take too much for granted, have not altogether succeeded in their stated intention of keeping to a minimum the retelling of novels and the furnishing of biographical details, but the advantage of this is that it allows them to judge the great body of secondary literature on which their essays are based, and to draw on it as they see fit.

The contribution of Pushkin to the space of twenty pages to touch upon almost every aspect of importance, and rightly so. He is shown to be a man of his time, a man of his time, a man of his time. He is shown to be a man of his time, a man of his time, a man of his time. He is shown to be a man of his time, a man of his time, a man of his time.

## Chamberlain's challenge

By W. N. Medlicott

SIMON NEWMAN:  
March 1939: The British Guarantee to Poland  
253pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press, £6.50.

On March 15, 1939, the German army entered Prague. Neville Chamberlain's first comments were restrained; but after sleeping on the problem he made the momentous announcement to the Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, that he had decided that he could no longer trust the Nazi leaders. On March 17 in his Birmingham speech he roundly condemned Hitler's conduct, and Halifax was able to meet the appeal of his Foreign Office advisers to strike while the iron was hot.

Simon Newman makes good use of the Foreign Office documentation to reassess British policy in the ensuing crisis, after a lengthy introduction to "appeasement" and the long-standing misconceptions of British policy associated with that word. As an attempt to locate a détente with Germany it arose from awareness of the potential danger to British interests in Europe, and all the plans for agreement with her implied her acceptance of corresponding restraints. Appeasement, indeed.

In the pejorative sense of attempting to buy off a potential enemy, was never seriously tried. How, therefore, can it be urged that it never worked? Such a policy would have involved, essentially, giving Japan a free hand in North China, Italy a free hand in Abyssinia, Germany a free hand in Eastern Europe. Britain's vulnerability overseas increased the importance of friendship with Germany. But she was not prepared to pay the price.

And in this sense there was no change in policy after Chamberlain became Prime Minister in May 1937: he was never prepared to agree that Britain should wash her hands of eastern Europe, or put pressure on France to abandon her alliances there.

So the Munich period saw the development of plans for aid to Balkan states, sponsored by Halifax and approved by Chamberlain in spite of the walls of the Treasury. An inter-departmental committee under Lord Rieu-Lafayette considered recommendations for the bolstering up of south-east European countries, and Romania, Germany's sole source of imported oil in Europe, figured largely in the plans for a possible blockade of Germany in which Chamberlain was taking a great interest.

Early in 1939 the policy had been reached, after the government's failure to contain Germany by peaceful means in 1938, when further German expansion would decisively tilt the balance of power against Britain in Europe. By March 1939, when the only German ally, but not the only German ally, was in a state of reversion to second class status.

Thus the issue, Dr Newman argues, was now essentially a

## Before the storm

By Peter Pulzer

PETER GRUFF, PETER KRUGER and others (Editors):  
Akten zur deutschen auswärtigen Politik 1918-1945  
Series B  
Volume 8: 1 January-30 April, 1928  
589pp. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, DM42.

The documents presented in Volume 8 of *Akten zur deutschen auswärtigen Politik 1918-1945* date from the first four months of 1928: the last year of "normalcy" and, it might be argued, the last year of real peace. They contain few surprises, since many have been available on microfilm. They underline the prevailing atmosphere of non-crisis and patient, piecemeal negotiation, both in Stresemann's careful double game with

matter of power politics; and the purpose of the Polish guarantee was to provide a pretext for going to war with Germany. The only alternative was for Britain to abdicate as a Great Power. Furthermore, Germany was to be given no exit. The most interesting aspect of the story from this point is the emergence of Halifax as the dominating figure in negotiations with the Germans, and the urgent and indeed hasty move by which he and his Foreign Office henchmen achieved the new set-up. He had evidently gained greatly in confidence since 1938 and had been saying since February, "no more Munich for me." He told the Cabinet on March 27 that, faced with the dilemma of doing nothing or entering into a devastating war, "he favoured our going to war."

The alarmist statement on March 17 by Virgil Tila, the Romanian minister in London, that Germany

had presented his country with an ultimatum, remains something of a mystery; it was denied next day by the Romanian Foreign Minister. After talks with Tila in 1927 Dr Newman concludes that the most likely of a number of explanations is that Tila was acting on secret instructions from King Carol, who wanted to ginger up the British Government and his own against Germany. When Halifax reacted with the proposal for a four-power agreement by Britain, Russia, Poland and France in defence of European peace Chamberlain was still not prepared to go beyond a warning to Germany without a commitment to fight; he was not doing the challenge to Germany but let apparently that it should proceed as slowly as possible because every month's delay would improve Britain's armament position. But after it had become painfully evident that no one had any use for

A Turkish Jira brigade in action: one of nearly three hundred pictures reproduced in A. J. P. Taylor's *The Last of Old Europe* (226pp. Sidgwick and Jackson, £5.95), a photographic "Grand Tour" of the period 1850-1914.

## The rise of the right

By Jeremy Noakes

TIMOTHY ALAN TILTON:  
Nazism, Neo-Nazism, and the  
Peasantry  
186pp. Indiana University Press (AUP), £5.40.

The duchess of Schleswig and Holstein played such a significant role in the unification of Germany achieved historical significance in this century for their part in the rise of Nazism. Before Hitler came to power in 1933, Electoral District No 13, which embraced the duchies of Schleswig-Holstein, had the dubious distinction of being the only district in Germany to give the Nazis an absolute majority—51 per cent. Since then, the politics of Schleswig-Holstein in the Weimar Republic have been studied more closely than those of any other area in Germany with the inevitable exception of Bavaria; Nazism, Neo-Nazism,

and the Peasantry is the fourth study to appear. It does not, as the title claims, provide a comprehensive analysis in English of the rise of Nazism to a specific region. Even allowing for the qualification "in English," that honour still belongs to the 1945 English version of Rudolf Heberle's pioneering work, *The Peasantry and the Rise of Nazism*, from *Democracy to Nazism: A Regional Case Study of Political Parties in Germany* (Baton Rouge 1945, reprinted 1974).

In fact, it is doubtful whether Timothy Alan Tilton himself would make such a claim. For the main focus of his book is not so much on the rise of Nazism itself as on the relationship between structural changes in rural society over a period of time and right-wing extremism. Using a modernization model of fascism, he examines the rise of Nazism in Schleswig-Holstein since 1933. Again the author relies on good old-fashioned research, but has supplemented it with some interviews. He attributes the failure of the NPD to compete with the success of the Nazis primarily to the modernization of the economy, whose socially disruptive effects were cushioned by state assistance. This has not only reduced the percentage of the rural population but above all has provided present-day farmers with the opportunity to escape from onerous payment in a declining industry, whereas the Weimar farmers were trapped on his often marginal farm because of the simultaneous urban areas.

The first two chapters concerning the period before 1933 are basically a commentary on the work of Heberle and others. Although the author has done some research in the Schleswig archives it does not add anything substantially new. Nevertheless, it is a sensitive and perceptive commentary which provides a useful corrective to some of the points made by Heberle and others. For example, Professor Tilton is right to insist that the transition from liberalism to Nazism was not such a startling reversal of political opinion as had been maintained. The strength of rural liberalism in Schleswig-Holstein also indicates how exaggerated and the affinity of the "liberalism" to Nazism understated. This distorted emphasis unfortunately contributed to Lipset's misleading definition of fascism as an "extremism of the centre." Professor Tilton also rightly points out simple correlations between economic crisis and political extremism. The rise of Nazism, he points out, cannot be traced simply to the precarious economic situation of certain social classes but must be seen in the context of the attitudes

was justified by Hitler's immediate plans. Even though Colonel Beck, the Polish Foreign Minister, was extremely cagey and not prepared at first to offer more than consultation in the event of a German attack on Britain, Halifax went ahead, and had secured by March 27 the cabinet agreement in principle to a guarantee of Polish independence, without reciprocal guarantees.

The strategic assumption was that, apart from western Europe, a line must be held against future German aggression made up of the frontiers of Poland, Romania, and Yugoslavia; there were a great many reasons why the inclusion of the Soviet Union at this stage was considered impracticable, despite the opinion of the Chiefs of Staff, pronounced more than once during the crisis, that the Soviet Union was a "very firm line" with Germany, even without the certainty of Polish support, because "this very fact would be likely to bring Poland in." The German occupation of Memel on March 23 and reports of pressure on the Poles undoubtedly created a greater sense of urgency in London than

Taking a broad view he sees the attempt to stem German expansion in eastern Europe as a strand of power policy largely concealed by the desire of the British government to give their actions "the appearance of British goodwill and sweet reasonableness, of a Britain forced reluctantly into war." If this is accepted, belief in Hitler's unique responsibility for the Second World War is undermined. Instead of a German war of aggression, the war becomes one of Anglo-German rivalry for power and influence, the culmination of the struggle for the right to determine the future configuration of Europe. This is an unimpressive view and one which could well have some rather startling developments.

which these classes hold and which they prepared to interpret that economic experience in categories favourable to the Nazi cause. In the light of the fact that irrational and anti-democratic traditions of the pre-war period had been sustained by the political and interest group representatives of the peasantry, and since the peasants' economic situation was deteriorated by the failure both of their traditional representatives and of the state to alleviate the crisis, it is not surprising that they turned to the Nazis, who provided the most extreme and the most dynamic expression of these irrational and anti-democratic sentiments; and this trend was accentuated by the traditional parties' lack of effective organization at local level.

The second major section of the book examines the rise, during the 1960s, of the extreme right-wing NPD in the context of the socio-political changes in Schleswig-Holstein since 1933. Again the author relies on good old-fashioned research, but has supplemented it with some interviews. He attributes the failure of the NPD to compete with the success of the Nazis primarily to the modernization of the economy, whose socially disruptive effects were cushioned by state assistance. This has not only reduced the percentage of the rural population but above all has provided present-day farmers with the opportunity to escape from onerous payment in a declining industry, whereas the Weimar farmers were trapped on his often marginal farm because of the simultaneous urban areas.

Finally, the author offers a number of generalizations about the emergence of fascist movements. These, he suggests, are most likely to develop when a structural rural crisis, accompanied by a depression occurs simultaneously with an urban economic crisis which provokes a solution to the rural crisis through emigration to the cities. This interpretation certainly helps to provide an explanation for the rise of Nazism in Schleswig-Holstein, and the subsequent failure of the NPD. Yet, it appears questionable whether it can provide a general explanation for the rise of Nazism. For, while it is true that Nazism flourished most vigorously among rural populations of north Germany, its support in some large towns and among some urban groups (white-collar workers are a notorious example) was also very considerable. There is also the question of generation which the author neglects, at least in these qualifications. Professor Tilton has written a most stimulating book. By setting the rise of Nazism in Schleswig-Holstein in the broader context of the province's socio-economic development over half a century, he offers a new perspective to the study of right-wing extremism in Germany which could fruitfully be applied in other areas.

## PLIGHT OF MUSLIMS IN INDIA

S. HARMAN  
First Published 1976  
(Circulation stopped by Indian Customs)

Based on factual research and on the spot survey of conflicts and problems of about a hundred million Muslims living in India, this book classifies and classifies out that Muslims are in the Philippines, Laos, etc. and possibly in future in the USA and some African countries, wherever Muslims are or become a stable minority, such problems are likely to arise. £4.00.

D.L. Publications,  
89 Pinner Road, Pinner, London W2 5SU







### By John Bender

The editing and production of *The Renaissance Imagination* are a credit to the publisher, who has published essays were gathered in periodicals and festschriften. These, Stephen Orgel has gathered more accessible by providing accurate translations into English, and by adding foreign language editions. The illustrations are aptly interspersed, of good quality. Above all, Professor Orgel provides the three substantial, historically informed introductions, which introduce the volumes. The preface indicates that his editorial task in the case of "Rosalind and Myriapods" and "Rip's Fate" extended to selecting and editing the texts, and that the other essays were results fully justify the undertaking. Dr. J. Gordo's excellent specialized studies are now set in a proper context of his much general view of Renaissance imagery and culture.















# Invocations to Calliope

By David West

**LUCRETIVS:**  
The Poem on Nature (De Rerum  
Natura)  
A translation by C. H. Sisson  
210pp. Manchester: Carcanet. £3.90.

No need to do without sex if you  
keep off love;  
You simply have it without the  
disadvantages.

This is the voice of C. H. Sisson and  
it goes very well with Lucretius, but  
Sisson has not so much in common  
in this translation as Sisson plain:  
A man may rush out of a  
magnificent palace  
Because he is sick of the place,  
then go straight back  
Because he feels he better anywhere  
else.  
He drives like mad to reach his  
country house  
As if he were going there in joy  
and yawns immediately he reaches  
the door.

Telling observations, moral force,  
and Sisson has not always  
understood them. What English  
reader could make anything of this  
account of the sexual act (He is  
talking about the penis.)

# Etruria wear

By J. B. Ward-Perkins

**LARISSA BONFANTE:**  
Etruscan Dress  
243pp. Johns Hopkins University  
Press. £14.00.

As Larissa Bonfante reminds us in  
her introduction, what can be  
known about the Etruscans is far  
more important than their so-called  
myths. Their costume is one of  
the aspects of their life about which  
we know so little, but which is  
informed by so much of their  
culture, and which is indeed a  
cosmopolitan and a political boun-  
dary, dress is undoubtedly an  
important component of the picture  
which any people presents to its  
contemporaries. When one recalls  
how many representations of men  
and women have come down to us  
in Etruscan painting and sculpture,  
it is rather surprising that there  
should be so little serious study  
of this aspect of their civiliza-  
tion. Perhaps this is because so  
much of what they wore was bor-  
rowed from Greece or from the East  
and has a rather familiar look. But  
the Etruscans were by no means  
aloof imitators. Their dress was  
cultured, reflecting aspects of their  
culture, reflecting aspects of their  
culture, reflecting aspects of their  
culture.

Dr Bonfante's approach to her  
subject is uncompromisingly sys-  
tematic. She begins by dividing her  
material into subject-categories—  
of that word, and belts, tunics,  
mantles, shoes, hats, and, for good  
measure, hair-styles—and each of  
these categories is further sub-  
divided. The bibliography of the  
subject is enormous, but Dr Bonfante  
has done a superb job of sifting  
the material. The two volumes com-  
prise the translation of the text, which  
was begun in 1927 by G. Babiloni  
and has since been translated by  
a number of different scholars.  
The appearance of the index (the  
eighth volume) in the near  
future will complete the whole  
work, as Book 14 and Book 15 have  
already appeared. The first  
fragment being the latest to be  
published, in 1969, Book 13 contains  
questions arising from the works  
of Plato, and a refutation of the  
Stoics. It is translated by Harold  
Cherniss.

# Before the courts

By J. A. C. Thomas

**J. M. KELLY:**  
Studies in the Civil Judicature of  
the Roman Republic  
140pp. Oxford University Press.  
£5.75.

The variety of tribunals which  
existed in the Roman Republic for  
the resolution of legal disputes is  
well known to students of the  
ancient world, and regularly  
referred to in both general monographs  
and specialized treatises of Roman  
civil procedure: but the interrela-  
tion and possibly overlapping compe-  
tence of the tribunals has hitherto  
escaped detailed consideration. In  
the five chapters of *Studies in the  
Civil Judicature of the Roman  
Republic*, J. M. Kelly makes a  
valiant effort to remedy this defi-  
ciency.

The first chapter makes a plausi-  
ble case that the court of the  
centumviri was an institution of  
great antiquity with a jurisdiction in  
succession issues, testate and  
intestate, and matters related  
thereto, the breadth of its composi-  
tion deriving from the original  
composition of the tribes by gentes,  
families of common name, rather  
than by geographical districts; the  
source of its competence in succes-  
sion matters he finds in the possi-  
ble inheritance rights of gentes if  
a person died intestate without  
agnate descendants or a nearest  
agnate—rights confirmed to them in  
the Twelve Tables.

The continued use in the court  
of the *legis actio* procedure after  
the virtually wholesale adoption  
elsewhere of formula procedure is  
explicable in the author's view  
by the unavailability of a pecuniary  
award in succession cases which  
could involve not only material  
assets but also questions of  
paternity, parental power and so  
forth. The argumentation is variable  
in the possible personal issues are  
somewhat exaggerated—but the  
analysis is sound.

Professor Kelly demonstrates that  
the traditional view that *recuperato-  
res* had their origin in interna-  
tional law for the settlement of  
post-bellum issues (return of plunder  
and prisoners, etc) has a illogical  
foundation, and argues that they  
public law context in Roman law  
itself: such origin would explain  
both their utilization in private law  
national issues and in private law  
delicts which had at least potential  
repercussions of a public nature—  
treason, assault and battery, etc.  
The accepted view, but without  
wholly convincing, but without  
correctness of his own. The actual  
features of recuperatorial process

he sees in its expedition,  
which one can certainly see  
and an audacious, determined  
highly dubious proposition  
private matters, recuperatores  
powers but only of adjudication  
also of enforcing their awards.

In the following chapters, each  
devoted to a number of legal  
assumptions, but not all well  
accepted, the author attempts a sys-  
tematic analysis of the  
stances of genuine litigation to be  
found in the Digest, showing how  
and family law issues to be  
determined by contract and  
property following, and do not  
being a minor source of litigation,  
indicating the relative activity of  
the various courts. At the  
conclusion, depends upon account  
of his assumptions. What the  
certainly does demonstrate is that  
Professor Kelly has undertaken a  
confusingly daunting task of an  
exhaustive scrutiny of the whole  
Digest.

One questions the absolute neces-  
sity of the following chapter to  
further the author's investiga-  
tion of the spheres of the various  
tribunals. Drawing heavily on the  
literature of rhetoric, it suggests  
that concern with *eximium*, *re-*  
torical, and dislike of exposure in  
public courts—for present purposes,  
the source of the present purposes,  
—must have made actual litigation  
the very last resort of disputants,  
even more strongly than at the  
present day.

Finally, Professor Kelly comes to  
the *unus iudex*, usually the pre-  
dilem of conventional discussions  
of Roman procedure. In the light  
of what precedes, the single judge  
would appear to have been widely  
rather over half of the case, and  
brought, an arbitrator rather  
than an adjudicator, before whom  
litigation could proceed without  
recourse to oral trial; a procedure  
which could be conducted in a  
gentlemanly manner without sus-  
tained publicity. The picture is some-  
what persuasive.

Professor Kelly is the first to  
propose that the *imprescriptio*  
nature of his enterprise. Argumen-  
tation in such a venture is neces-  
sarily more or less speculative, but  
it can be said that his book is  
not only a valuable contribution to  
the study of Roman law, but also  
a demonstration of the author's  
ability, and control of the source  
material, lay no less than legal;  
he does not say that he is fully  
convinced, with relevant modern  
literature. The style is neither arti-  
ficial nor artless; true, there are  
some purple passages and Chapter  
4 has more than a smattering of  
rhetoric of the sources of which it  
treats; but in general the writing  
is clear and lucid. Professor Kelly  
has produced a valuable and stimu-  
lating pioneering work and earned  
the gratitude of all who are inter-  
ested in the judicature of the  
Roman Republic.

# Claudius and Co

By Robin Seager

**PAUL PETIT:**  
Pax Romana  
Translated by James Willis  
368pp. Basilard. £11.50.

Paul Petit's book is a study of  
the Roman Empire, the first presents  
a very brief, general account of the  
structure and workings of the  
Roman Empire from Augustus to  
Commodus, so brief that Augustus  
of value only to a student of the  
subject, though at times excessive  
in the uninitiated, creates obscurities  
and many technical terms. (Often  
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For good works among the  
upper classes. At only one point  
does he lead to chaos, on the  
question of the succession, where  
the fates of Agrippa Postumus and  
Tiberius Gemellus are cited to sup-  
port the claim that "every emperor  
who had a son chose him, but often  
in vain".  
Petit is clearly aware that  
Postumus was not Augustus's son  
except by adoption, though the  
Postumus in succession matters  
is a very real problem. The  
statement that Tiberius was respon-  
sible for the death of Agrippa Post-  
umus is a bold claim. But he does  
appear to believe that Gemellus was  
Tiberius's son, not his illegitimate  
son. The second section, entitled  
"The Problems", is an extended  
and, *Forchungsbericht*, and  
throwing out suggestions for these  
actual writers. Grades to these  
actually discussed, and those not  
discussed are far too legalistic, as if  
years on day set down in front of  
a Constitution of. As A. H. M. Jones  
and others have clearly shown, the  
largely *ex-actis* in public rela-  
tions, directed by political trial, and  
error and always subject to modifica-  
tion in response to public opinion.

As for the suggestion that in 19 ac  
Augustus resolved only "certain  
outward tokens of consular power  
such as the *fascis*, it is time scholars  
realized that a grant of the *fascis*  
without the *imperium*, the powers  
of which they symbolized, would be  
a nonentity.  
Nor need Augustus's right to  
make war and peace (restated by  
Suetonius, whose testimony is aver-  
looked) create problems; it too  
to be seen in the light of the post-  
Augustan administrative convenience for  
the government of a vast province  
already conceded to Rome in 66 ac.  
Accounts of some other matters  
are, however, to be com-  
mended: *overturas* is put to its  
proper place, the notion of a *ius  
honoris* is rightly rejected, and the  
limitations of demography are ac-  
cidentally defined.  
The third part of *Pax Romana* is  
simply a bibliography, with some  
striking omissions despite its scope  
and erudition. A natural reaction,  
more than disappointment, is that  
book's shortcomings are baffling  
as to its purpose. The first section  
will gain little from the second  
and will recall in justified terror from  
scholars and graduates. Moreover,  
one feels compelled to ask whether  
such material should not nowadays  
be confined to learned journals.

FICTION

# When the cows come home

By Derek Mahon

**BRIAN MERRIMAN:**  
The Men who talked Babytalk  
283pp. Martin Bland and O'Keefe.  
£4.

Brian Merriman, who is not  
descended from the Gaelic poet of  
the same name, dedicates his extra-  
ordinary first novel "to the pre-  
Socratic and to Queen Maeve of  
Cannougha, who never even heard  
of them." Queen Maeve, you will  
remember, was largely to blame for  
the Táin Bó Cuailgne, the cattle  
raid of Cooley, an epic event which  
led to war between Ulster and Con-  
naught; and there are many echoes  
of this theme, as also of pre-  
Socratic philosophy, with its  
interest in such things as meta-  
psychosis. The prequel, Griffin,  
a young Irish-American lived in

# De tongue of de Englishman

By Valentine Cunningham

**BARRY UNSWORTH:**  
The Big Day  
181pp. Michael Joseph. £3.95.

Black comedies—even ones with  
quite respectable reputations—fre-  
quently fail to make any tonal bed-  
fellows out of the mix of blackness  
and lightness. On the one hand,  
"games and fun" (to borrow the  
phraseology of one of the over-  
seers of English attending the  
National College of Further  
Education in Barry Unsworth's  
latest novel) can too easily distract  
from the seriousness of the dancing  
attendance on, and on the other the  
more earnest reflective may seem  
simply to be interlarding with those  
who at worst—even, occasionally,  
at best—for this is the fate of  
Evelyn Wough's *Vile Bodies*—the  
writing becomes distractingly  
stratified, flickering uselessly from  
light to dark to light again. For its  
part, *The Big Day* is not least dis-  
tinguished by its managing, on the  
whole, to fit its two tones together.

# The people's countess

By David Wilson

**KEITH CLARKE:**  
Margit Visconti  
222pp. Gollancz. £4.75.

Keith Clarke's novel is about the  
relativity of freedom, the pre-  
carious and ambivalent border be-  
tween the state's freedom from and  
the individual's freedom to. The  
story hinges on the crossing of that  
border, from East to West, and  
makes it plain that "freedom" is  
more complex, less easily identified  
than political mythology on either  
side of the fence would have us  
believe.

For Margit Visconti, grande  
dame of the Hungarian theatre, it  
becomes a matter of perspective  
rather than choice. A countess in a  
people's republic, she has never  
been troubled by this official con-  
tradiction until she receives a sum-  
mons from what the state calls the  
political branch but what she  
union official and Kossuth Prize  
awardee though she is—occurs  
police. Naturally nervous, with an  
unusually fear of flying and of  
cars, Margit is terrified by the pro-  
cedure of being interrogated, even  
when her investigator turns out to

be a genial captain with a friendly  
interest in her career. But the real  
fear derives from not knowing why  
she is being interrogated. One of  
those little crimes of which every-  
one is guilty, the time in the dis-  
cussion of "Police states". Margit's  
director remarks without irony,  
"are founded on the doctrine of  
original sin."

POSTAGE INLAND 5P ABROAD 7P  
SECOND CLASS POSTAGE PAID AT NEW  
YORK, N.Y. MAIL PERMIT NO. 6000  
NEW YORK, N.Y.

# On the beach

By Allan Massie

**LUDOVIC JANVIER:**  
The Bothing Girl  
111pp. Calder. £4.95.

She laughs. Her neck being  
titled back the beating of the  
ceroid urinary can be perceived  
down to her, all bared, she  
straightens up. Embarrassed and  
tense because of the Clesse up.  
She taken little slips.

The nouveau roman has been with  
us now for twenty years and  
Ludovic Janvier's *La Boiteuse* was  
written by Gollancz in 1968.  
This translation is by John Matthews  
and has been revised by Barbara  
Wright; it seems satisfactory, un-  
cluttered. The question the *nouveau*  
roman has really been posing these  
two decades is simple enough. Does  
it really, or does it merely, offer a  
response from the "traditional"  
novel? (We are sufficiently used  
to it now to disregard the original  
question—is it a hoax? It is  
clear enough that where there is  
bores it rests in an edifying, not  
in the novel.) Undoubtedly the  
novel has to be read differently—  
in the purely physical sense. It is  
slower; a painting, not a movie.

In *The Bothing Girl* we're on a  
beach at a resort. Through a narrow  
angle survey it—the record of  
this survey constantly interrupted  
by sounds heard in conversation  
the utmost banality overheard. Mr  
Janvier is self-indulgent in not re-  
stricting himself to one day, one  
afternoon, one hour. Time actually  
passes. What's more, the observer  
engages in speculation. It is by  
no means all physical. Yet it is  
the physical that dominates, and  
does so with a marvellously attrac-  
tive certainty. Bit by bit, with the  
patience of one working with

# A reasonable breakdown

By Catherine Peters

**MARY HOCKING:**  
The Moid Hie Mountains  
207pp. Canto and Windus. £4.

Tom Norris's wife interrupts the  
washing-up to tell him that the wolf  
is back in the hills; it changes not  
in his head. When a difficult  
hysterical woman with whom no one  
also will work is loaded on to him  
as an assistant, he converts his own  
need for help into an insistence on  
solitude, and his growing obses-  
sion with her further up his  
mental balance as she mischievously  
cooperates with his fantasies and  
encourages his increasingly bizarre  
behaviour. When nature compels  
(a likely, unlikely) by sending the  
wolf back to his den, the breakdown  
intensifies Norris's isolation; an  
explosion becomes inevitable and  
his unbalance can no longer be  
ignored.

With the thaw comes a slow  
return to more acceptable kinds of  
perception. Mary Hocking does not  
shrink back up the cliff. She  
shook to discover that his wife  
had had her own difficulties, and  
her needs will have to be taken  
account of in any attempt at a  
solution. Mary Hocking does not  
provide one—she has too much  
respect for her characters to  
indulge in easy answers or happy  
endings, but in this fine new novel  
she leaves them with dignity and  
hope.

# No one to blame

By Nicholas Jose

**NOEL HILLIARD:**  
Send Somebody Nice  
191pp. Robert Hale. £3.60.

In this collection of stories, set in  
New Zealand, Noel Hilliard focuses  
on small, individual plights which  
at the same time illustrate the large-  
scale disorders of his society. His  
characters are made up of various  
combinations from the following  
categories: undereducated, Margie,  
delinquent teenagers, communists,  
homosexuals, prostitutes, and the  
essentially, the nostalgic detail  
of his earlier collection, *A Piece  
of Land*, have been abandoned here  
in favour of an almost documentary

objectivity. "Abconder" is a  
transcript of a delinquent's account  
of himself, as a social worker might  
hear it. "Corrective" training  
consists of a desperate, sixteen-year-  
old girl's prison correspondence  
with an older lesbian. A lively,  
workmanlike approach sheds clear  
light on the community's sore  
areas.

Affectionate concern is the  
author's attitude to the social vic-  
tims he describes—the plain un-  
wanted girl, the shy boy forced to  
strip to be like our Saviour by a  
perverted Sunday school teacher,  
the half-caste schoolboy who assid-  
uously denies his racial origins—and  
thus the reforming impulse in the  
writing is diminished. In "The Girl  
from Keop" Mr Hilliard points out  
the superficiality of the sociologist's  
response to the individual: "in  
Street Meeting" he observes the

irrelevance of the local communists'  
rhetoric; "the amercement of the  
working class". But all that is  
offered instead is a generalised  
paraphrase of everyone's decon-  
stant: "And some want new clothes  
and others want new companions  
and a lot went love". Mr  
Hilliard looks for someone on whom  
to blame the miseries he has re-  
corded, but in real adversity is  
forbearing. There is none of the  
terrifying subterranean gloom that  
marks his brilliant compatriot,  
Janet Frame. For reformers the  
enemy within is only a second-best  
enemy: "the only thing they can  
smoke up with confidence and a  
big cheque of success is them-  
selves". Mr Hilliard emerges as a  
living portraitist of ordinary  
random things, who fails to deliver  
them from the remoteness of his  
eye and the comfort of his and their  
environment.



